

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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To: Coastal Commissioners and Interested Parties

From: Alfred Wanger, Deputy Director
Jack Gregg, Supervisor, Water Quality Unit

RE: Status Report on the Coastal Commission Water Quality Unit

The Commission's Water Quality Unit is made up of five staff members with expertise in environmental sciences and planning. The unit is primarily funded by a Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 319 grant from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) for efforts to implement the California Nonpoint Source Plan (Plan). Commission staff co-authored the Plan with the SWRCB in order to address federal requirements for both a coastal nonpoint source pollution control plan (CZARA Section 6217) and a statewide nonpoint source plan (CWA 319). The plan was approved by federal agencies in 2000 and was the first in the nation to combine the elements of these two federal laws.

Initially the Plan approval led to a large jump in nonpoint source program funding that supported water quality staff assigned to each district office and supported two additional Commission staff working on water quality issues. This level of staffing allowed the water quality unit to learn how to apply the rapidly growing body of nonpoint source science and regulation to Coastal Commission issues and to work closely with district planning staff on developing appropriate recommendations for California coastal development issues, while at the same time working with the SWRCB to lead 28 state agencies in implementing the statewide aspects of the NPS plan. Over the last two years we have not been able to replace staff lost to attrition due to the hiring freeze and funding reductions. As such, our priorities have been shifting to take advantage of the CWA Section 319 funds dedicated to statewide NPS program implementation. While we continue to support Commission planners as new water quality issues are identified, more of our time is dedicated to statewide program implementation issues than in previous years. Commission staff shares

program implementation responsibilities with the SWRCB and leads efforts that have coastal significance, for example the water quality staff lead efforts to address nonpoint source aspects of development associated with wetlands, hydromodification projects, urban development, marinas, and Critical Coastal Areas (see below). The Commission brings to the statewide program its expertise in land use planning, outreach and education, resource protection and coastal issues, as well as the authority to implement appropriate elements of the Plan in the Coastal Zone.

The two primary objectives of the Coastal Commission's Water Quality Unit are:

- 1) Protect coastal water quality through technical support for development in the coastal zone and
- 2) Co-lead the development, implementation and tracking efforts of the California Nonpoint Source Plan statewide.

The following is a listing of the recent work in those areas.

Technical Support in the Coastal Zone:

- Work with project applicants and Commission planners to incorporate appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality.
- Provide comment on upcoming projects and provide periodic fact sheets on coastal water quality issues during the Commission staff's monthly permit review meetings.
- Provide project-specific support to federal consistency and energy staff.
- Ensure that Coastal Development Permits (CDPs) are consistent with any Regional Water Board-approved Stormwater NPDES permits at the project scale.
- Provide in-depth project analysis, monitoring plans, findings and permit conditions as requested by planning staff.
- Work with local governments to incorporate appropriate water quality policies and ordinance language in Local Coastal Programs (LCPs).
- Work with local stakeholders to address specific water quality issues along the coast (workshops on construction and septic system impacts on water quality, workshops on stormwater permit implementation in the Coastal Zone, Snapshot Day volunteer monitoring events, local watershed group participation, etc.).
- Promote coastal water quality projects by participating in development of grant guidelines and reviewing coastal project proposals funded by state bond funds and federal grant programs.

- Support federal coastal management programs by participating in water quality protection efforts at National Marine Sanctuaries (Channel Islands, Monterey Bay and Gulf of Farallones), Morro Bay National Estuary Program, etc.

Implementation of the California NPS plan

- Co-lead California Nonpoint Source program with SWRCB and USEPA: CCC water quality staff focuses on coastal watershed issues, education and outreach, wetlands and hydromodification, marina and recreational boating, citizen monitoring, tracking BMP implementation (urban, wetland, marina, coastal).
- Provide other state agencies with guidance and technical assistance for reducing polluted runoff and encourage them to use their authorities to reduce nonpoint sources of pollution.
- Lead or co-lead policy development workgroups that are working on the nonpoint source pollution control aspects of Wetlands projects, Hydromodification projects, Marinas.
- Work with the SWRCB and USEPA staff to develop methods to track the progress of the state in implementing all appropriate NPS Management Measures by 2013 (the primary goal of the California Nonpoint Source plan).
- Work with Water Board Stormwater and TMDL program staff to integrate our respective program goals and enhance our ability to address coastal water quality issues.

The focus of the Water Quality Unit in implementing the CA NPS plan over the next two years will be on the following initiatives:

- **Resource-Based Watershed Planning - Critical Coastal Areas Program:** The “CCA” program has involved the coordination of 15 state agencies to identify 100 areas of the coast where development is impacting (or threatening) coastal water quality. The goal of the program is to address water quality threats through resource-based watershed assessments and accelerated NPS program implementation in coastal watersheds. Pilot projects have been funded through state and federal grants in Orange, San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Humboldt Counties (e.g., Crystal Cove, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Watsonville Sloughs and Trinidad Head pilot projects). Water quality staff members have initiated stakeholder workgroups in each of these areas and will work with them over the next two years to assess the impacts of development on water quality and the benefits of implementing the California Nonpoint Source plan in those areas. The resulting CCA Action Plans will recommend additional water quality protection efforts for funding.

- **Education and Outreach - Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials:** Partnering with state agencies, universities, and other interested parties (including the Local Government Commission, League of Cities and California State Association of Counties) to develop and support an education and outreach program to inform local elected officials about the impacts of their land use decisions on water quality. This program is based on the national “NEMO” effort to make land use decision makers aware of their impacts on water quality and provide local governments with quantitative tools to promote decisions that protect water quality.
- **Tracking BMP Implementation:** As part of a national effort to identify the benefits of federally-sponsored nonpoint source pollution program, California must be able to show how we are progressing towards the goal of implementing the NPS Management Measures by the year 2013. CCC Water Quality staff is tasked with identifying performance measures for BMP implementation in marinas, urban development, wetland and hydromodification projects and are working with consultants, state working groups and key stakeholders to complete this work.
- **Other NPS program development:** Water Quality Unit staff is developing work plans for several efforts that will be conducted by contractors or local government representatives to support NPS program development. These include efforts to implement and support the NEMO and CCA programs through consulting services and coordination with local government partners. We are also working on an effort to better integrate water quality monitoring data in the Central Coast to answer questions about regional water quality as an example of how this should be done statewide. Another workplan being developed by water quality staff is to train citizen monitoring volunteers in sampling techniques and quality assurance so that the data collected can be incorporated into statewide effort to assess the quality of California’s waters.